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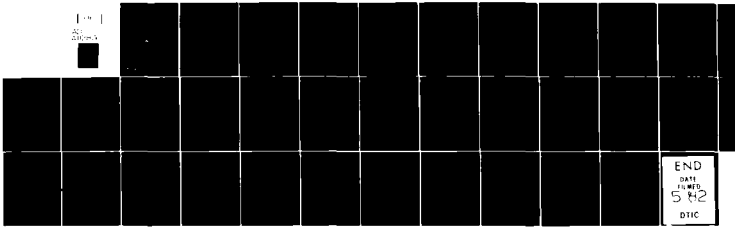

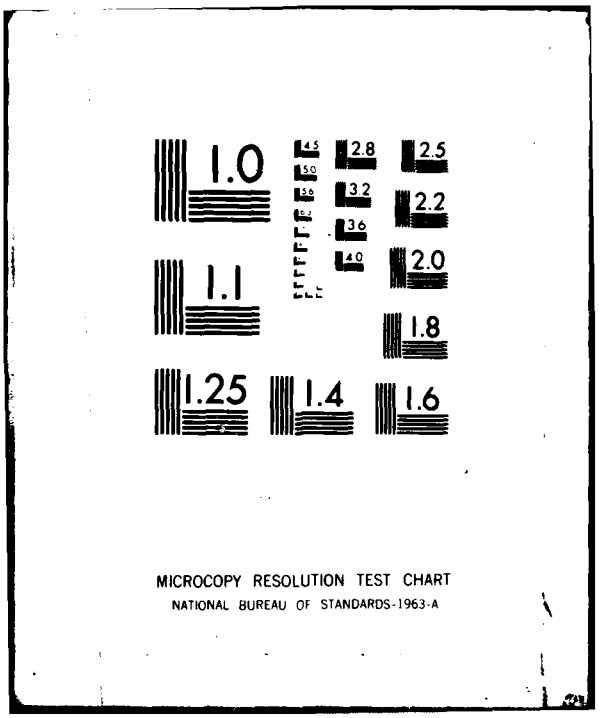
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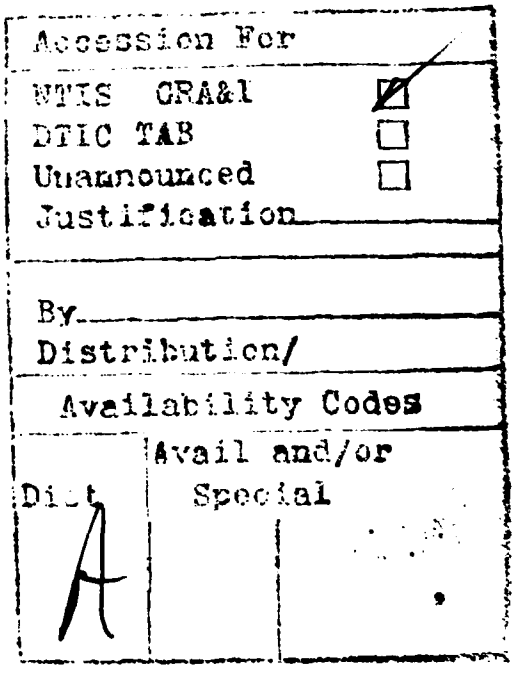
A STRATEGIC ANALYSIS OF THE GULF WAR

by

William O. Staudenmaier

25 January 1982



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NOTE: This memorandum is also a chapter in *The Gulf War: Old Conflicts, New Weapons,* Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1982, edited by Dr. Shirin Tahir-Kheli.

Composition of this memorandum was accomplished by Mrs. Janet C. Smith.

FOREWORD

This memorandum examines the Iran-Iraq War from a strategic perspective to determine its causes, to analyze the military strategy and events of the war in order to shed light on significant tactical and logistical developments, and to derive tentative conclusions regarding the strategic importance of the Gulf War. The author concludes that had Saddam Hussein properly evaluated the conflicting demands of his political objectives and security policy on his strategic concept, he would probably have abandoned the entire enterprise.

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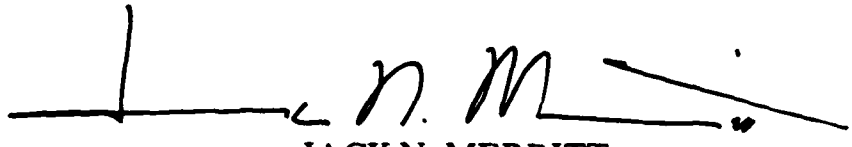
This memorandum was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.



JACK N. MERRITT
Major General, USA
Commandant

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

COLONEL WILLIAM O. STAUDENMAIER has been assigned to the Strategic Studies Institute since his graduation from the US Army War College in 1976. Previously he served as a divisional air defense battalion commander in Germany and in various staff assignments at the Department of the Army. Colonel Staudenmaier graduated from the University of Chattanooga and earned a master's degree in public administration from Pennsylvania State University. He has published articles on air defense and military strategy in professional journals and is a contributor to *The Gulf War: Old Conflicts, New Weapons* (forthcoming).

SUMMARY

When the Iraqi army invaded Iran in earnest on September 22, 1980, the expectation of many Western military analysts was of an Iraqi *blitzkrieg* that would overrun Iran's disintegrating armed forces in a few weeks and establish Saddam Hussein as the most powerful leader in the Persian Gulf. It was characterized as "Saddam's Qadisiya"—a reference to the Battle of Qadisiya in 637 in which the Arabs decisively defeated the Persian army leading to the fall of the Persian Empire. If the expectation was of a daring and violent *jihad,* the reality was that Saddam Hussein was more a scheming opportunist and less a holy warrior. Although some parallels exist between the Arab conquests of the seventh century and the Gulf War, solutions to the complex problems brought on by the current conflict must be sought in the context of today's regional strategic environment, which is complicated by the Western dependence on Persian Gulf oil, the flexing of Soviet military muscle in Afghanistan, the Arab-Israeli dilemma, and the volatile interaction of Arab nationalism and Islamic militancy.

The Gulf War has now entered its second year and neither Iran nor Iraq seems motivated to stop fighting. The front lines remain essentially where they were after approximately the first 8 weeks of war and the conditions for a cease fire have not budged since the first week. Iraq has lost over 21,000 killed and Iranian sources admit to more than 35,000. Neither country is sufficiently strong militarily nor politically willing to take the risks or casualties necessary to end the war. The war has resulted in a stalemate that operational strategists, constrained by the objectives, policies, and strategic concepts of their national leaders, will not soon break. In truth, the stalemate that exists on the battlefield is no more than the validation of the mistakes made by the strategists at the national level.

Iraq's political objectives put demands on the military strategy and its armed forces that were difficult to satisfy. The territorial objectives such as securing the Shatt al-Arab waterway and occupying the disputed territory in Kermanshah and Ilam Provinces were straightforward military missions that required only the occupation of limited amounts of terrain. Less limited and less easily accomplished were the further political aims of using military means to overthrow the Ayatollah Khomeini and to

establish Iraq as the strongest power in the Persian Gulf. A dispassionate analysis of these two latter goals demanded nothing less than the decisive defeat of the Iranian army in battle which Iraq apparently was not willing to risk. The return of the UAE's islands in the Persian Gulf also required a decision on the battlefield in view of the weakness of the Iraqi navy vis-a-vis Iran. Given the disparate demands of the political objectives, it was vital that the Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council define clearly their war termination goals, *before* committing their army to battle. Since they did not, what started out as Saddam's Qadisiya may yet prove to be his Waterloo.

A STRATEGIC ANALYSIS OF THE GULF WAR

When the Iraqi army invaded Iran in earnest on September 22, 1980, the expectation of many Western military analysts was of an Iraqi *blitzkrieg* that would overrun Iran's disintegrating armed forces in a few weeks and establish Saddam Hussein as the most powerful leader in the Persian Gulf. It was characterized as "Saddam's Qadisiya"—a reference to the Battle of Qadisiya in 637 in which the Arabs decisively defeated the Persian army leading to the fall of the Persian Empire.[1] If the expectation was of a daring and violent *jihad,* the reality was that Saddam Hussein was more a scheming opportunist and less a holy warrior.[2] Although some parallels exist between the Arab conquests of the seventh century and the Gulf War,[3] solutions to the complex problems brought on by the current conflict must be sought in the context of today's regional strategic environment, which is complicated by the Western dependence on Persian Gulf oil, the flexing of Soviet military muscle in Afghanistan, the Arab-Israeli dilemma, and the volatile interaction of Arab nationalism and Islamic militancy.

Judgments, military or political, are difficult to make in such a complicated situation. The restricted access of Western military analysts to the war zone is a further complication; nevertheless,

after over a year of fighting, sufficient information is available to make some preliminary strategic judgments regarding the Gulf War. This memorandum examines the Iran-Iraq War from a strategic perspective to determine its causes, to analyze the military strategy and events of the war in order to shed light on significant tactical and logistical developments, and to derive tentative conclusions regarding the strategic importance of the Gulf War.

ROOTS OF WAR

The Gulf War was caused by two types of precipitants—general and specific.[4] The general precipitants are the underlying causes of a conflict which usually are rooted in history, while the specific precipitants represent the more provocative and proximate causes for a conflict. In the case of the Gulf War, the general precipitants may be traced to the cultural divide that has separated the Arabs and Persians since at least the seventh century, when the conquering Arab armies extended Islam east of the Zagros Mountains. Also at that time Islam split into two rival factions—Shiite and Sunni—a split that still fuels much of the current Muslim unrest in Southwest Asia. Equally buried in antiquity is the ethnic problem posed by the Kurdish people in their seemingly endless quest for a national state which affects, among other nations, both Iran and Iraq. The quarrel over the Shatt al-Arab also casts a long shadow, dating back in the modern era to the 19th century, but actually antedating that by several centuries.[5] Thus, the general precipitants of the 1980 Gulf War are legacies of centuries of religious, ethnic, and territorial differences between Arabs and Persians.

A specific precipitant may be either internal or external. In fact, in the instance of the Gulf War, elements of both are present. An external precipitant acting on Iraq was Iran's attempt to export its Islamic Revolution to the Shiites of other Persian Gulf states; particularly onerous were the repeated calls of the Ayatollah Khomeini to the Iraqi people to "wake up and topple this [Baathist] regime in your Islamic country before it is too late."[6] Such exhortations posed a danger to the authoritarian, secular Sunni government in Iraq, in view of the large Shiite population in its Eastern Provinces. An internal precipitant that was pertinent to the outbreak of war was the ambition of Saddam Hussein to

achieve hegemony in the Persian Gulf region and to lead the Pan-Arab movement.[7]

Even with these serious fundamental differences between Iraq and Iran, something more was needed to ignite the flame of war; after all, these antagonisms had existed for some time. Saddam Hussein had a suitable spark readily at hand in the smouldering Shatt al-Arab territorial dispute, a longstanding disagreement between Iran and Iraq that often acts as a barometer reflecting the relative power status of these oil rich, contentious neighbors. The Shatt al-Arab waterway flows 120 miles from its origin at the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers to the Persian Gulf, delineating the border between Iran and Iraq over most of its length. The important Iranian oil ports of Abadan and Khorramshahr are situated on its banks and, at Basra, the Shatt al-Arab provides Iraq its major outlet to the Persian Gulf. The adjoining Iranian province of Khuzistan (called Arabistan in Iraq) is populated predominately by Arabs and has long been coveted by Iraq; the question of Khuzistan's sovereignty was raised almost immediately after the guns of World War I were muted and modern Iraq emerged.

The Shatt al-Arab dispute was "settled" in 1847, 1913, 1937, and, most recently, in 1975, when Iraq agreed to set the boundary in the center or *thalweg* of the waterway in return for Iran's pledge to refrain from providing further assistance to the Kurdish insurgency then holding sway in the mountains of northern Iraq. The 1975 settlement reflected Iran's ascendancy in the Persian Gulf and remained intact until its power waned following the overthrow of the Shah. The fomenting of religious and political discord in Iraq by Khomeini despite Iran's weakness led to an open split between the countries and may have convinced Saddam Hussein that it was time to act.[8] Hussein must have reasoned that Iran's military weakness, resulting from the chaotic aftermath of the Shah's overthrow, would enable Iraq to dispose Khomeini by defeating Iran in battle, thereby inflicting a severe setback to the militant Islamic revolution, crippling Iran as a Gulf power, and simultaneously establishing Iraq (and Hussein) as the leader of the Persian Gulf area. Consequently, President Hussein unilaterally announced that the 1975 treaty regarding the boundary on the Shatt al-Arab was "null and void."[9] To demonstrate Iraq's ascendancy and Iran's deterioration of the world, Saddam Hussein

demanded recognition of Iraq's complete sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab. Other demands were the return of certain border territory in the north allegedly promised to Iraq in the 1975 agreement but never provided, as well as the restitution to the United Arab Emirates of Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs—three islands strategically located near the Strait of Hormuz. When these demands were rejected by Iran, the Persian Gulf was on the brink of war.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

In developing an operational military strategy to achieve their political objectives, Iraqi war planners had to consider geographical and military factors that would impinge on the success of their operation. Operational military strategy—the strategy of the battlefield—is sensitive to the balance of opposing military forces and to the military geography of the theater of operations. Judgments concerning the military balance between Iran and Iraq must have been vital elements in President Hussein's strategic calculus on the eve of war. Iran had been the preeminent regional military power under the Shah, but now the Shah was gone and Iran was in turmoil. To understand the degree that the military balance between Iran and Iraq had changed requires an analysis of both static and dynamic indicators of military power. The significant static indicators of military capability (see Table 1), as viewed in mid-1980 might be rated a toss-up.[10] Although a quantitative analysis of primarily static indicators is somewhat enlightening, it is imprecise and must be combined with dynamic qualitative factors to present a more accurate assessment of a nation's military capabilities. This is especially true in the case of the Iranian armed services, which were purged of their "unreliable" elements when Khomeini assumed power in 1979.

Qualitative military factors such as leadership, combat experience, training, logistics, and command and control must temper any strategic analysis; in the case of evaluating the comparative military balance between Iran and Iraq, consideration of qualitative factors is indispensable.

Prior to the Islamic Revolution, leadership in the Iranian army was characterized by a feudal relationship between the officer corps and the enlisted ranks; after the revolution, when the officer corps

Military Strength Indicators
Iran vs Iraq
July 1980

Indicator	Iran	Iraq
Population	38 Million	13 Million
Defense Budget	4.2 Billion	2.7 Billion
Armed Forces	240,000	242,000
Army	150,000	200,000
Navy	20,000	4,250
Air Force	70,000	38,000
Reserves	400,000	250,000
Combat Aircraft	445	332
Tanks	1,985	2,850
Artillery	1,000+	800
Paramilitary	75,000	79,800

Source: The Military Balance, 1980-81, London: International Institute of Strategic Studies.
NOTE: Iran's totals adjusted for adverse effect of the Islamic Revolution.

Table 1. Military Balance

was purged and many enlisted men deserted, the result was regarded by most Western military observers as the virtual disintegration of Iranian armed forces.[11] Iraq was not without its own leadership problems—a retired senior British officer stated that

> . . . the [Iraqi] command level is unbelievably bad . . . the Iraqi general staff seems to be a farce. They used to refer to the British Army in World War I as 'lions led by donkeys.' Iraqi soldiers are tigers led by a pack of jackasses.[12]

Despite this harsh judgment made shortly after the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War, the edge in leadership must be accorded to Iraq, particularly if one were making the judgment just prior to the war, because of the disarray that existed in Iran.

The same is true regarding the combat experience of the opposing armed forces. Although six Iranian army brigades, along with elements of the navy and air force, received combat experience in the Dhofar Rebellion in the 1970's, apparently many of these veterans were purged in 1979-80. Elements of the Iraqi army not

only saw combat during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War (unpleasant as that experience was), but the army also fought a counterinsurgency campaign against the Kurdish rebels for over a decade. Although it is true that combat operations in a guerrilla campaign differ greatly from those conducted in mid-intensity, conventional warfare, the experience of operating in a hostile environment cannot be gained in peacetime training and its value should not be underestimated.

Training also has been a problem for both countries because of their rapid force expansion and modernization programs.[13] To train, expand, and modernize simultaneously is difficult for even the most advanced armies to manage; it is an almost impossible task for most developing nations. The lack of nationwide managerial ability and technological expertise is reflected in the armed forces of these two countries. It is also interesting that again in the Gulf War a Soviet trained and equipped armed force showed an inability to coordinate the use of combined arms, particularly airpower and tanks in offensive warfare. Iran was constrained similarly by poor training on the defense.[14] That neither Iraq nor Iran had military advisors from the Soviet Union or the United States in country at the time of the war had a lot to do with the ensuing stalemate.

Logistics will influence a nation's ability not only to initiate war, but also to sustain combat over a protracted period. Both Iran and Iraq relied on other nations to supply them with the equipment, ammunition, and spare parts necessary to conduct modern warfare. Iran, estranged from the United States and most of the world community because of the American hostage issue and isolated from its regional neighbors because of its strident efforts to export its brand of Islam, was particularly hard-hit. Western estimates of Iran's ability to operate its sophisticated weapons system were uniformly and justifiably pessimistic, particularly with regard to helicopters and high performance jet aircraft. At the outset of the war, Iran's 77 sophisticated F-14 fighters were virtually all grounded due to poor maintenance. Although other jet aircraft and helicopters were available, prewar estimates based on both the paucity of trained pilots and maintenance crews, as well as the lack of spare parts, put the operational rate of this equipment at about 50 percent.[15] Iraq, on the other hand, was perceived by Western military analysts to be capable of maintaining and operating its modern equipment, which it bought from both Western and Soviet sources.[16]

Command and control is the ability of a nation to direct its armed forces in the measured application of military power to achieve a political objective. The struggle between the Commander in Chief of the Iranian armed forces, Bani-Sadr, and the Ayatollah Khomeini led to a split in the armed forces. The Pasadran—the revolutionary guard militia formed to protect the revolution—became a counterweight to the regular military which was considered politically unreliable. The struggle continued, even after the onset of the Gulf War, when the military was cleared of its "infidelity." Iranian policy put the Pasadran in the limelight by assigning it to the defense of cities and villages where what little success that was experienced by Iran early in the war was achieved. The army was relegated to almost an auxillary status to be used to spearhead local counterattacks outside the cities. The existence of these two rival power centers led to a diffusion in the prosecution of the war such that military operations against the Iraqis were often used to serve domestic political ends. Some analysts believe that the Iranian counterattack in January 1981 was planned and executed by Bani-Sadr in an attempt to silence his domestic critics.[7] The Iraqi command and control system did not suffer from the schizophrenia characteristic of Iran's military command and control arrangement. By contrast, Saddam Hussein, as Commander in Chief of the armed forces, controlled the war directly through the Revolutionary Command Council, where each of the three military services was represented. So in Iraq, at least, as the war unfolded, a rational apparatus was available to develop military strategy and to execute military orders.

If Iraqi war planners made the same sort of assessment of the static and dynamic factors just outlined, they would have concluded that Iraq had the military capability to conduct a successful limited objective attack against Iran. Unless the Iraqi war planners grossly miscalculated their own military capabilities and the effect of the Islamic Revolution on Iran's military effectiveness, they could not have confidently contemplated a more aggressive and extensive attack, mindful as they must have been of the Shiite population to the rear of the invasion front and the potentially exploitable Kurdish situation in the north which would continue to tie down several Iraqi divisions. But there is more to a strategic assessment than the military balance. The physical characteristics of the operational theater is of fundamental

importance to the development of battlefield strategy. Skillful use of terrain is a key factor in operational military strategy as is maneuver. Both of these strategic factors were necessarily critical considerations in the development of the operational military strategy of the Gulf War.[18]

In viewing the theater of operations (see Figure 1) from the Iraqi perspective, several points leap immediately to mind. First, the salient military geographic fact is that Baghdad is uncomfortably close to the Iranian frontier. Second, three strategic areas in Iran are worthy of note: the oil rich coastal plain in Khuzistan Province in the south adjoining the Persian Gulf, Teheran, and the Bandar Abbas area astride the Strait of Hormuz. Only Khuzistan was of importance to the Iraqi war plan. Similarly, in Iraq, there are three strategic areas of interest—the Basra area on the Shatt al-Arab,

OPERATIONAL AREA
FIGURE 1

Baghdad, and the Kirkuk oil fields, further north. The Basra area could be protected by the invasion in the south, which would serve to block access to Baghdad from that direction, but Baghdad is also vulnerable from the north through several passes through the Zagros Mountains. If one is intent on attacking Iran in the south, geography dictates that the prudent military strategist plans secondary attacks in the vicinity of Qasr-e Shirin to gain a strong strategic position astride the historic invasion route Teheran-Kermanshah-Khanaquin-Baghdad. Blocking positions should be established further north in the mountains of Kurdistan at the easily defended Rowanduz Gorge, located just north of As Sulaymaniyah, to prevent an Iranian column, using the route originating in Azerbaijan, from reaching the Mesopotamian Plain in the vicinity of Kirkuk. A position should also be established at As Sulaymaniyah to block the eastern approach to the important oil complex at Kirkuk.[19]

Movement or maneuver, which has a major influence on strategy on the battlefield, varies greatly over the theater of operations. In Khuzistan, vehicular traffic is fair to good as far north as Dezful, but further north into the Zagros Mountains vehicular traffic and even foot mobility for large military formations becomes difficult and road bound. On the coastal plains, military movement is slowed considerably with the onset of the winter rains in November and remains hampered until June or July.[20] Military operations are generally of low intensity and only of local importance until the rains cease and the roads become passable in the late spring, after the flooding caused by the melting snows in the mountains of Russia and Turkey has subsided.

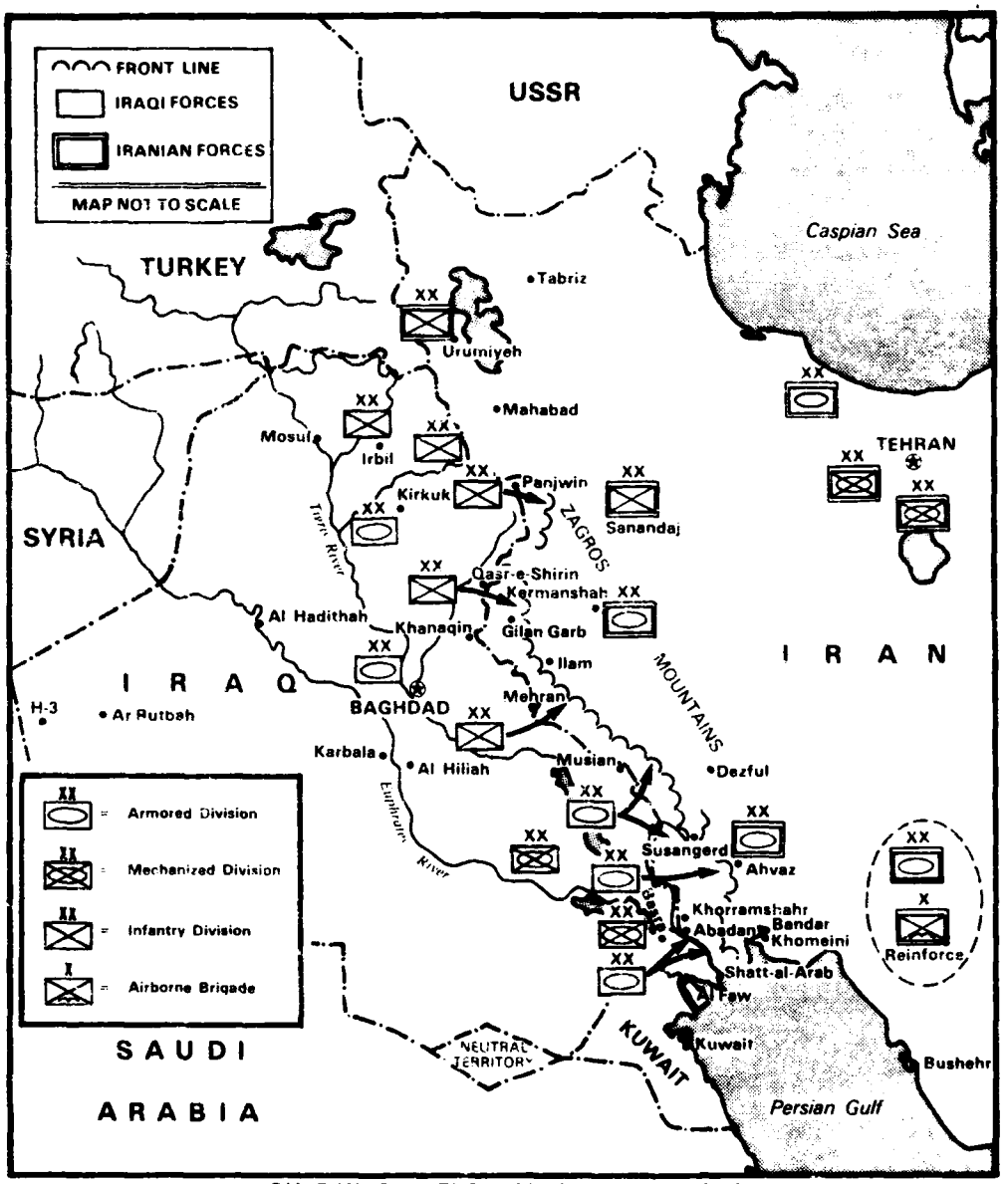
Based on the characteristics of the operational area, the major strategic factors that the Iraqi and Iranian military planners would have to consider may be outlined. From the Iraqi perspective, it was imperative to protect Baghdad from possible Iranian incursions along the ancient invasion routes in the northern mountains, while simultaneously protecting the oil rich Basra area. Iraqi strategists also had to secure the mountainous area in which the potentially rebellious Kurds were always capable of causing trouble and, further north still, the Iraqi defense planners would have to consider the contingency of a Syrian threat. Thus, approximately five Iraqi divisions were needed in the northern highlands, two were required to defend the central area near

Baghdad, and three armored and two mechanized divisions were guarding the southern frontier opposite Khuzistan.[21] All 12 Iraqi divisions, then, were arrayed on or near the Iranian border, relying on the desert to protect the less threatened southern and western flanks.

Iran, however, had different strategic priorities. Faced with the threat from the Soviet Union both from the Transcaucasus in the north and from Afghanistan in the east, with the unrest in Baluchistan on the Pakistan border, plus the need to protect Teheran against the possibility of another US attempt to free the hostages, on the eve of war Iran posted four of its nine understrength divisions along the 1,300 kilometer Iraqi frontier. Elements of these divisions, along with the revolutionary guards, had been in contact with the Iraqi units for several months along the border in the north. The Iranian deployment against Iraq consisted of one infantry division posted near Urumiyeh (see Figure 2) to protect against the Soviet threat to Azerbaijan, although it could also be used to threaten Kirkuk; another infantry division stationed at Sanandaj in the mountainous Iranian Kurdish area; further south an armored division was placed strategically in Kermanshah; in Khuzistan another armored division was located at Ahvaz to cover the entire area from Dezful to Abadan.[22]

From the Iranian viewpoint, a rational prewar strategy to counter an Iraqi invasion would have included a forward defense of Khuzistan, imposing as long a delay and as many casualties as possible on the Iraqi forces, while preparing a counterthrust in the north, probably from Kermanshah, aimed at Baghdad. Other elements of the Iranian operational plan probably would include the use of unconventional forces to infiltrate the Shia region of eastern Iraq and the Kurdish area in the north to stir up trouble in the rear of the attacking Iraqi forces.

As subsequent events showed, the Iraqi plan clearly envisioned a main attack in the south weighted with three armored and two mechanized divisions to secure the line Dezful-Ahvaz-Khorramshahr-Abadan. Supporting attacks in the north of divisional strength would seize critical terrain in Iran to block the avenues of approach to Baghdad. In the air, Iraqi planners hoped that a preemptive attack patterned on the Israeli air attack on Egypt in 1967 would gain air superiority by destroying the already weakened Iranian air force on the ground. Because of the disparity



GULF WAR – THEATER OF OPERATIONS
FIGURE 2

in naval power that favored Iran, little help could have been expected from the Iraqi navy to assist the land battle. That all did not go according to plan can be attributed in part to what Clausewitz called friction—it is the difference between war on paper and war on the battlefield.[23]

THE WAR

Clausewitz wrote that "Everything in war is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult." Clausewitz attributed this difficulty to friction, which is expressed in modern managerial terms as Murphy's Law—anything that can go wrong, will go wrong. Clausewitz saw that the danger, fatigue, and uncertainty inherent to combat caused things to go wrong on the battlefield.[24] But things can go wrong long before troops are committed to the battlefield. The concept of friction, as conceived by Clausewitz, was limited largely to the battlefield; but today flaws in planning or misjudgments relating to the selection of political objectives and to policy often doom a military operation before the battle is joined.

A reason why strategic plans often go awry on the battlefield is because the political objectives that establish the ends of military strategy and the security policies that establish political rules to control strategy are not compatible with the selected strategic concept—or vice versa. The Gulf War is a classic case in this regard. Before any nation resorts to the use of force to secure its national interests, the statesman and the general must enter a dialogue to insure that the military means are in agreement with the political end. The most formidable strategic problem for Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War was to insure that the political objectives, security policies, and military strategy were congruous.

Military strategy may be thought of as operating on two primary levels—overall strategy and operational strategy.[25] Overall military strategy is concerned with the general war plan and deals with translating political ends into military objectives to be achieved by the use of sound strategic concepts within the context of established security policies. The function of operational strategy is to translate the requirements of overall strategy into operational plans consistent with the constraints imposed by tactical doctrine and logistic capabilities. In the development of an integrated military strategy encompassing both strategic levels, first the strategist must be concerned with overall strategy and then operational strategy, but to analyze how these strategic levels functioned during a war in which the strategy has not been made public, it is necessary to assess them in inverse order. Once the events of the war are analyzed to determine the validity of the operational concept in

terms of its tactical and logistical determinants, then the effect of the political objectives, security policies, and overall military strategy on the conduct of the Gulf War may be evaluated.

COMBAT OPERATIONS ON LAND, SEA, AND AIR[26]

Prior to the Iraqi attack on Khuzistan, Iran and Iraq had been fighting intermittently along the northern border areas for almost 14 months. Fighting flared anew in early September at Qasr-e Shirin when Iraq "liberated" two villages—Zain al-Qaws and Saif Saad—in a disputed border area. The lack of an effective Iranian response must have convinced President Hussein that the time was ripe to seize the Shatt al-Arab.

The timing of the Iraqi invasion is an intricate issue, revolving around perceptions of Iraqi strength and Iranian weakness. Although the Iraqi army had been supplied by the Soviet Union for years, it was in the process of modernizing and diversifying its armed forces. Spain, Brazil, Italy, and especially France, were selling modern arms to Iraq in return for oil. Hundreds of tanks and armored personnel carriers for the army, four frigates and six corvettes for the navy, and 60 Mirage F-1 fighters for the air force were scheduled to begin to enter the Iraqi arsenal in 1981. Many military analysts considered that these Western-developed weapons might tip the regional military balance decisively to Iraq. Yet, to await the completion of the modernization process, which would require extensive crew training on the new weapons before they could be used in combat, would mean that an attack could not take place until the fall of 1981 or perhaps 1982. Even a few months delay would indicate that any possible settlement of Iraqi accounts with Iran could not occur until at least July 1981 when the weather would again be suitable for campaigning in Khuzistan. Such a delay might allow Ayatollah Khomeini time to consolidate his hold on Iran and, in view of the approaching presidential election in the United States, settle the divisive hostage crisis, which was isolating Iran internationally. Furthermore, Saddam Hussein had his eye on the conference of nonaligned nations which would be held in Baghdad in 1982. If he could defeat Khomeini in 1980 or 1981, Saddam Hussein would not only be the leader of Pan-Arabism, but might also become the most influential leader of the nonaligned nation movement. Faced with this temptation, Saddam apparently decided to launch his attack on Iran on September 22, 1980.

The Ground War. The ground attack swept the militia border guards aside and quickly bypassed and isolated Khorramshahr and Abadan from Ahvaz. The attacks on Ahvaz and Dezful, although not challenged strongly, were not as successful as those further south in Khuzistan and were stalled short of those urban objectives, creating a salient at Susangerd which remained a threat to the Iraqi logistical network in that sector. The second prong of the Iraqi invasion force seized Mehran and pushed further eastward to the foothills of the Zagros Mountains to secure the important road network linking Dezful with northern Iran west of the Zagros and simultaneously blocked access to Iraq from that direction. The third thrust, further north, gained the critical terrain forward of Qasr-e Shirin that would counter any Iranian plans to threaten Baghdad from that vulnerable sector. A subsidiary attack in the Musian area occupied territory that Iraq claimed was promised by the Shah as part of the 1975 Algiers Agreement.[27] By the end of September, Iraq declared that her territorial objectives of the war had been reached.[28]

This announcement was certainly a trifle premature since the Iranian naval blockade had not been broken and neither Khorramshahr or Abadan on the Shatt al-Arab had been captured, not to mention Ahvaz and Dezful. Had the failure to occupy these key military objectives been part of an Iraqi plan to force its armored force deep into Khuzistan, consciously avoiding these urban pockets of revolutionary resistance, to bring the regular Iranian army to battle, it would have been in the classic tradition of armor tactics. But this was not the case; battle in the cities apparently was avoided as a deliberate policy choice to keep casualties low.[29] Consequently, the Iraqi army neither struck deep to engage the Iranian regular army, nor did it attack the cities with infantry units, opting instead to encircle the cities, if possible, and cause their surrender primarily through artillery and rocket bombardment, supplemented by air attack.

The Iranian response to the Iraqi ground attack was not well coordinated, since it appeared that two separate armies reporting to two separate leaders were fighting the war on behalf of Iran. The Pasdaran—revolutionary guards—and other militia units bore the brunt of the initial attack. Fighting with light infantry weapons and with "molotov cocktails," they made the Iraqis pay a dear price in the urban areas.[30] Nevertheless, the primary reason Iran was not

defeated at the outset of the war can be attributed to the inept tactics and strategy of the Iraqis, rather than to any leadership exerted by Iran's high command. However, it must be acknowledged that the Iranian soldiers, particularly those belonging to the Pasdaran, fought with a fervor and intensity that caught not only the Iraqis by surprise, but most Western military analysts as well. If the armed forces were to delay or stop Iraq long enough for Iran to mobilize its own larger population for a war of attrition that would prove so costly to Iraq as to convince Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Iranian territory, then the separate armies should be brought under central control. To that end, on October 13, 1980, Ayatollah Khomeini established the seven-member Supreme Defense Council to run the war and decide on all defense issues. Bani-Sadr was named to head the council, but his power was diluted by the presence of hard-line mullahs.[31] The creation of this top-level decisionmaking body was progress, but it did not keep the religious leaders from interfering (and even giving orders to army front line commanders) in combat operations, nor did it stifle the internal power struggle which survived even the fall of Bani-Sadr.

The first tactical success of the war for Iraq was the capture of Khorramshahr—renamed Khuninshahr: city of blood—at a cost of over 1,500 killed and, perhaps, three times that number in wounded. More than anything else, the casualty rate in this battle seems to have convinced the Iraqi high command to lay siege to Abadan rather than attempt to capture it by house-to-house fighting. After Khorramshahr fell, the Iraqi army established pontoon bridges across the Karun River south of that city, enabling the army forces to threaten Abadan with encirclement.[32] The encirclement was not completed and Abadan held out until almost a year later when in October 1981, Iranian forces, in their most successful ground operation of the war, pushed the Iraqi forces back to the western bank of the Karun River and lifted the siege. Reportedly, elements of an Iranian regular division, an airborne unit, gendarmerie, and newly mobilized recruits took part in this battle, indicating a command and control capability several levels above that experienced even in mid-1981.[33]

After the fall of Khorramshahr and the initiation of the siege of Abadan, ground operations in Khuzistan slackened. Apparently, the Iraqis were willing to sit out the winter in a static, forward

defense in Khuzistan, digging in and attempting no further advances. Iran, beset by domestic instability, was believed not to have the capability to mount a major counterattack. Further north, the Iraqis were still occupying positions they had captured the first week of the war. By holding fast along the entire front, neither advancing nor retreating, Iraq was able to keep its border towns and villages out of range of Iranian artillery. The only deviation from this *sitzkrieg* occurred in the Kurdish area in northern Iran, where a new Iraqi front was opened in December in the vicinity of Panjwin by elements of an Iraqi infantry division. This new front would serve to support the Kurdish guerrillas, who were already active in the area.[34] Securing advantageous terrain in the Panjwin area would also provide better protection for Kirkuk.

The lull in fighting caused by the onset of winter enabled both nations to reinforce their front line units. Iran seems to have fared better in this regard than Iraq—of course Iran also had fewer units committed to the early battles. The initial Iraqi ground attack, following Soviet doctrine, probably achieved a local favorable combat ratio in troops and armored vehicles of about 5 or 6:1; but it has been estimated that by the end of December this ratio, still favoring Iraq, had dwindled to approximately 2 or 3:1.[35] Iran further bolstered its defenses, especially in the Ahvaz area, by selectively flooding certain areas to prevent their use by Iraqi troops.[36] For their part, the Iraqi engineers were busy constructing a network of earthen flood walls near Ahvaz to protect against the flooding of the Karun and other rivers in the area and to guard "against possible Iranian attempts to drown the invaders by opening irrigation dams."[37] Additionally, to insure that Iraqi troops in Khuzistan could be supplied during the rainy season, a new two-lane hard-top road was constructed from Basra to the Iraqi front lines near Ahvaz. After making these preparations, both armies settled down to fighting a strategic defensive war with daily artillery duels, while they waited for the winter to pass.

This phony war was shattered when the Iranians counterattacked in the Susangerd sector on January 5, 1981. The attack was the largest tank action of the war; unfortunately, few authoritative details of this battle have been published in the open literature. It is clear, however, that Iran suffered a serious defeat and there were heavy personnel and equipment losses incurred by both sides.[38] Iraq reportedly lost about 50 T-62 tanks and the Iranian tank

losses, primarily *Chieftain* and M-60's, may have reached 100. If this is true, more than 300-400 tanks and armored vehicles may have been engaged in the battle. It also has been suggested that the ill-fated battle was fought more for domestic Iranian political reasons than for strategic ones. Analysts point to the fact that Bani-Sadr was under attack by the militant holy men for not prosecuting the war more assiduously. The religious leaders extolled the virtues and fighting spirit of the Pasdaran and denigrated the lack of aggressiveness on the part of the army. Although the counterattack that Bani-Sadr caused to be launched was much less than Clausewitz's "flashing sword of vengence," it did temporarily, at least, stabilize the President's position in his power struggle with the Ayatollah Khomeini.[39] After this battle, the ground war settled into the artillery stalemate that has yet to be broken.[40] Overall, the land battle resembled nothing so much as a football game fought between the 20 yard lines, with neither team strong enough to score and defeat its opponent.

The ground fighting exposed several problems which, paradoxically, were common to both Iran and Iraq. First, both nations were armed with the most modern and sophisticated weapons systems that money could buy, but they were relatively ineffective during the course of the war. The lead computing sights on the Iraqi tanks seldom were used (probably because of substandard crew training), lowering the accuracy of the T-62 tanks to World War II standards. The Iranians had similar problems with their M-60 and *Chieftain* tanks, except they were more maintenance centered. Neither country was able to bring its sophisticated ground attack weapons up to maximum effectiveness. For example, Iraq only used the Frog-7 and Scud-B surface-to-surface missile on two occasions, both in the vicinity of Dezful. The TOW and Dragon antitank missiles in Iran's inventory saw little action, not even in Khuzistan where the line of sight visibility required by these weapons was excellent.[41]

Second, neither Iran nor Iraq demonstrated the initiative and aggressiveness demanded by modern mid-intensity offensive warfare. The Iranian militia and revolutionary guards fighting in the cities of Khuzistan showed an aggressiveness and tenacity in defense not matched elsewhere on the battlefield, attributable perhaps to the fact that these "true believers" were fighting to save their revolution. To say that either side followed the doctrine of

their superpower mentors is to misread completely American and Soviet doctrine for offensive warfare. Both the USSR and the United States stress the importance of maneuver in offensive warfare. Boldness, speed in the attack, coordinated use of all weapons, and combined arms operations are all elements of each superpower's offensive ground force doctrine. There are also differences, but the combat operations of the war did not follow the authoritative doctrine of either superpower. One reason for this apparent anomaly may have been because both Iran and Iraq had sent the military advisors of both the United States and USSR home.

Finally, neither Iran nor Iraq was able to mount an effective combined arms attack. The Iraqi attack was slow moving and tedious, relying on artillery more than any other arm, and never combining fire and maneuver in large unit operations. The January 1981 Iranian counterattack attempted to use combined arms tactics and it was a dismal failure. As a result of this battle, Iran changed its tactics to use armor in support of infantry, never trying to mass them again, until the October 1981 offensive to relieve the siege of Abadan. It is too soon to tell if this attack represents a change in tactics.

The War at Sea. At sea, the picture is much the same. The naval war began almost simultaneously with the land battle, with a naval engagement being fought by patrol boats of both navies. A second naval battle erupted on September 24, when Iranian warships attacked Basra and two oil terminals located in the Persian Gulf near the Iraqi port of Fao. The third and the last, as well as the largest naval engagement, was fought on November 29-30. The engagement included the shelling of Fao and a commando attack that damaged Mina al-Bakr, Iraq's offshore oil terminal. The navies retired after these engagements and, if one can believe the claims of the belligerents, Iran lost about 56 percent (76 ships) of its naval assets, while Iraq's losses were estimated at about 66 percent (42 ships). One cannot have a high degree of confidence in any losses that are computed on the basis of the unsubstantiated claims of nations at war and even less confidence when neutral journalists are not permitted in the war zone. If the losses were only half the amount claimed, however, it would still represent a significant loss rate.[42] The Iranian blockade of Iraq, proclaimed on the first day of the war, was never broken; 69 ships remained trapped in the war

zone. Iran continued to resupply and reinforce Abadan by sea until the siege was broken in October 1981.

Naval diplomacy also played a key role in the war. Perhaps the most important policy established early in the war was the public Iranian assurance that it was determined to keep the Strait of Hormuz open. Iran also warned that it was prepared to take appropriate naval action against those Gulf states that were aiding Iraq. These declarations made Western naval intervention to keep Hormuz open unnecessary and informed the regional states of the risk involved in providing aid to Iraq.[43] The warning to the Persian Gulf littoral nations was apparently necessary, since it was reported early in the war that Iraq had assembled helicopters and a ground force in Oman to attack and occupy Abu Musa, and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs. The attack was forestalled when British intelligence reportedly discovered the plot, and diplomatic pressure was exerted on Oman by other Western nations. The plan was abandoned when the Omani government denied Iraq the right to launch the attack from its bases.[44]

Although the Iranian blockade was effective in the Persian Gulf area, the Iranian navy could not establish a blockade at Aqaba or at the Saudi Arabian Red Sea ports, through which Iraq received a substantial amount of supplies and war goods. Other Gulf states supported Iraq's territorial claims, closing ranks behind their Arab brother, but they stopped short of attacking Iran either physically or rhetorically. Jordan was Iraq's earliest and most consistent supporter throughout the war. At the beginning of the war more overt support was provided by the Gulf states to Iraq, to the point of allowing Iraqi aircraft to disperse to airfields in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Oman, UAE, North Yemen, and Kuwait to avoid attack by Iran.[45] After Iran and Iraq began to attack each other's oil installations, the Gulf states realized the vulnerability of their own oil facilities. This vulnerability was emphasized by a figurative "shot across the bow" of the littoral states, when Iranian fighters attacked a Kuwaiti desert outpost as a warning to desist from overt support of Iraq. (Kuwait had been transshipping goods by land to Basra.) The result of the Iranian attack was threefold. First, the Iraqis' dispersed aircraft were forced to leave their sanctuaries and return to Iraq. Second, the other Arab Gulf states began to demonstrate a more cautious approach toward Iraq. Third, Saudi Arabia requested assistance from the United States in protecting

her oil fields; help was forthcoming in the dispatch of four Airborne Warning and Control System Aircraft (AWACS). These aircraft were on patrol on October 1, 1981, when Kuwait was singled out again as a surrogate to provide a warning to Iraqi supporters. Iran, in a potentially dangerous escalation of the war, attacked Kuwait's oil storage facility at Umm al-Aysh. The US AWACS reportedly detected the approaching Iranian aircraft but, if true, it is not known whether the Kuwaitis were forewarned. In any event, the attack was successful and unimpeded.[46]

These Iranian threats to widen the war caused the Persian Gulf states to act circumspectly when providing aid to Iraq. The Arab Gulf states clearly were willing supporters of Iraq's limited territorial claims and certainly would not have been displeased if the war resulted in the overthrow of Khomeini, who was militantly advocating a fundamentalist Islamic revolt among the Shiite populations of these countries. However, Saudi Arabia and the lesser Arab regional states feared that if events got out of hand a cornered Khomeini might lash out to destroy the Persian Gulf oil facilities. Thus, the failure of Iraq to knock out the Iranian air force on the first day of the war opened the Gulf states to retaliatory strikes, and left these states less than enthusiastic about continuing their overt support for Iraq.[47]

The Air War. The air war began with a preemptive air strike on 10 military airfields in Iran. The air attack achieved surprise, but faulty Iraqi air tactics prevented the destruction of the Iranian air force on the ground. As a result, the Iranian air force not only survived the strike, but achieved a measure of surprise in its own right when it conducted air attacks on Basra and Baghdad on the second day of the undeclared war. As recounted earlier, Iraq prudently had dispersed a large part of its air arm to the safety of neighboring Arab countries, presumably beyond the reach of the Iranian air force. Despite this early activity, neither warring party used its air force to decisive advantage, preferring not to confront its opponent in air battle. This mutual policy of conflict avoidance in the air paralleled similar policies on land and at sea. The pattern that air operations followed for the remainder of the war was set in the first week. Both belligerents executed deep strikes into the interior of the other's country, largely bypassing military targets, in favor of high visibility economic or psychological targets. These attacks, conducted by tactical fighters usually in pairs but often in

"fours," penetrated to their targets unimpeded because neither combatant could field an integrated air defense system. Combat patrols were airborne near the common Iraq-Iran border, but few successful intercepts were made.[48]

Although some fighters performed close air support missions early in the war, including Iranian helicopter gunships achieving some tank kills using antitank heat-seeking missiles, the tactical sortie rate was not near capacity level.[49] Poor maintenance and lack of trained pilots hampered Iran's air effort, factors which were expected, but the level of air operations that this decimated force apparently achieved was remarkable. The poor Iraqi experience was not expected and must be attributed to low pilot quality, although Saddam Hussein lay the blame on poor Soviet equipment.[50]

On April 4, 1981, in one of the more dramatic air actions of the war, F-4 *Phantom* jet fighters struck deep into Iraqi territory to attack the H-3 oil complex. To strike H-3 and the associated al-Walid airfield, base of Iraq's strategic bombing force (TU-22 and IL-28's), the Iranian aircraft would have had to fly 810 kilometers from their nearest base at Reza'iyeh, with a full armament load at low level to try to avoid radar detection. The round trip is beyond the unrefueled range of the F-4. Iraq claims that it had radar contact with the Iranian F-4's and tracked them into Syria; 67 minutes later the aircraft again appeared on Iraqi's scopes in Iraqi airspace. The inference is that Syria allowed the Iranian strike force to be refueled in their country; Syria, of course, denies the allegation and there the matter rests.[51]

The war in the air was marred by poor tactics, ineffective air defense systems, and an inability to mount sustained air operations. The Iraqi air force failed to destroy the Iranian air force on the ground in its preemptive raid because it employed faulty tactics. The Iraqi air force, either because of poor training or deliberate doctrine, concentrated the attack on obstructing airfield runways by cratering, instead of attacking the more lucrative targets such as parked military aircraft or their associated support facilities. Both sides put a low priority on using their air force to support ground operations. Consequently, both Iran and Iraq were able to reinforce and resupply their front line units. Neither side was able to design and conduct an interdiction or rational strategic bombing campaign.[52]

The early warning and command and control capabilities apparently collapsed, allowing Iran and Iraq to violate each other's airspace with virtual impunity. The surface-to-air missile systems of Iraq (SA-2, SA-3, SA-6, and SA-7) and of Iran (Hawk, Rapier, and Tigercat) were uniformally noneffective. Similarly, the Iraqis had excellent air defense gun systems, but they could not operate them effectively. The air defense gun systems—the Soviet-built 23mm ZSU-23-4, and the tank-mounted 12.5mm machine gun—should have been an effective weapon system to use against the Iranian Cobra antiarmor helicopters firing the US wire-guided TOW missile.[53] Other reports indicate that the Iraqis had trouble maintaining the radar on the ZSU-23-4 and simply massed their fire at a point in space, hoping that the Iranian attack helicopter would fly through the "wall of steel"—not a very effective tactic.

The air war was characterized by spasms in which first Iran and then Iraq would launch reprisal raids on each other's economic or population centers. Yet, neither belligerent seemed able to sustain an attack long enough to have a serious strategic effect. Neither air force seems to want to throw the knockout punch, either through design or because the lack of spare parts or jet fuel prevents them mounting a sustained attack.

Much of the history of the war on the ground, at sea, and in the air has been a search for logistical resupply. Early in the war Iran received supplies, mostly medical and spare parts, from North Korea, Syria, and Libya. Israel, apparently in an attempt to keep the Gulf War going since it diverted one of its staunchest enemies, reportedly supplied Iran with parts by air. Iraq used secret third parties to purchase arms from several countries that relied on Iraq for a large percentage of their oil imports. Iraq has spent at least $2 billion on arms since the Gulf War began, ordering missiles from Brazil, light tanks from Austria, jet aircraft and infantry fighting vehicles from Spain, and the Roland surface-to-air missile system from France. It is speculated that the main reason these weapon systems are being bought is not solely for use on the battlefield, but to keep the armed forces loyal to Saddam Hussein.[54] On balance, it seems that both Iran and Iraq have been successful at resupplying the modest needs of their armed forces at the current low level of combat.

OBJECTIVES, POLICY, AND STRATEGY

The Gulf War has now entered its second year and neither Iran nor Iraq seems motivated to stop fighting. The front lines remain essentially where they were after approximately the first eight weeks of war and the conditions for a cease fire have not budged since the first week. Iraq has lost over 21,000 killed and Iranian sources admit to more than 35,000.[55] Neither country is sufficiently strong militarily nor politically willing to take the risks or casualties necessary to end the war. The war has resulted in a stalemate that operational strategists, constrained by the objectives, policies, and strategic concepts of their national leaders, will not soon break. In truth, the stalemate that exists on the battlefield is no more than the validation of the mistakes made by the strategists at the national level.

Iraq's political objectives put demands on the military strategy and its armed forces that were difficult to satisfy. The territorial objectives such as securing the Shatt al-Arab waterway and occupying the disputed territory in Kermanshah and Ilam Provinces were straightforward military missions that required only the occupation of limited amounts of terrain. Less limited and less easily accomplished were the further political aims of using military means to overthrow the Ayatollah Khomeini and to establish Iraq as the strongest power in the Persian Gulf. A dispassionate analysis of these two latter goals demanded nothing less than the decisive defeat of the Iranian army in battle which Iraq apparently was not willing to risk. The return of the UAE's islands in the Persian Gulf also required a decision on the battlefield in view of the weakness of the Iraqi navy vis-a-vis Iran.

Given the disparate demands of the political objectives, it was vital that the Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council define clearly their war termination goals, *before* committing their army to battle. The objective of overthrowing Khomeini, which then hopefully would lead to Iraqi Pan-Arab leadership, could only be achieved by pursuing security policies and a strategic concept of total war. Nothing less was compatible with the strategic object desired. But the policy pursued by Iraq was designed to keep Iraqi casualties to a minimum. Regardless, if this policy were adopted for humane reasons or, more likely, because the shaky Hussein government could not afford to incur relatively large casualties

(particularly among Shiites) without incurring the wrath of the population, the result was the same: a disconnect between the security policy and military strategy needed to achieve the political objective.

Certainly, it is possible that Hussein and his advisors underestimated the capability of the Iranian army to resist even a low intensity attack. They may have overestimated the military effectiveness of their own military forces or have allowed their expectations to place too high a probability on an anticipated uprising of the Arab population in Khuzistan. Reportedly Shahpour Bakhtiar, last Prime Minister under the Shah, was in Iraq two weeks before the invasion commenced and was reported to be in Jordan at the end of September. Did he advise Saddam Hussein that the invasion would certainly trigger uprisings within Khuzistan and the Iranian armed forces that would overwhelm Ayatollah Khomeini? Reports to that effect circulated early in the war. There was even speculation that Hussein had agreed to install Bakhtiar as the head of an Iranian free government in Khuzistan as soon as Ahvaz was captured, which was expected to occur about October 5, 1980.[56] If this account is true, President Hussein will not be the first would-be conqueror in history to be poorly served by an ambitious politician or general in exile. Whatever the facts, an incongruity in the relationship of the objectives, policy, and strategy flawed the operation from the start.

For its part, the political objective of Iran was to restore the *status quo ante*. But this straightforward political objective was confused and complicated by the intrigues of Iranian domestic policies. The war struck amid the struggle between the religious fundamentalists and the more moderate faction of Bani-Sadr, which has for the moment been resolved in favor of the Ayatollah Khomeini. This bitter internecine struggle had a tremendous influence on the conduct of the war, particularly in the besieged cities of Khuzistan, where the policy was to have the revolutionary guards—Pasdaran—bear the brunt of the fighting, and whose success strengthened Khomeini. Comparatively fewer victories were celebrated in the war by the regular armed forces, a fact that adversely reflected on Bani-Sadr. The hopes of the Iranian religious leaders that the war would not develop in a way that would give the army a central role, and the Iraqi policy of not exposing its forces to a risk of heavy casualties, was a prescription for a low intensity

war. Another policy of vital concern to the West was the Iranian decision not to close the Strait of Hormuz. This policy virtually insured that the Gulf War could be contained.

CONCLUSIONS

The Gulf War has strategic lessons to teach that may be more important than those contained in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War because it reveals another way that warfare between developing countries could evolve. A major lesson of the 1973 war from the Western military perspective was that modern mid-intensity warfare could be violent and logistically prohibitive. Western strategists quickly incorporated the lessons of that war into their strategy to defeat a Soviet armor attack in Western Europe. When the United States began to consider serious contingency plans for the use of force in Southwest Asia following the enunciation of the Carter Doctrine, military strategists superimposed a "Fulda Gap" mentality on the strategic environment in the Persian Gulf region. They assumed that wars in the Middle East-Persian Gulf region would follow the 1973 Arab-Israeli model, and that doctrine and tactics developed as a result of that would be relevant to them. It seems clear now that this may only be partially correct. The first conclusion regarding the Gulf War must be that not all wars between Middle Eastern or Southwest Asian countries need be modeled after the Arab-Israeli War. This does not mean that future wars in the region should not be *planned* to follow the Israeli strategy. There is reason to believe that the weakness of the Iranian army at the outset of the war would have permitted a much bolder strategy that could have destroyed the elements of the Iranian army in Khuzistan Province. But this still might not have been enough to win the war, considering that the overthrow of Khomeini was a central objective.

The second conclusion is that it is difficult to fight a limited war with a revolutionary regime whose survival is at stake. The war may have been limited from President Hussein's perspective, but for Ayatollah Khomeini it was a total war fought to save the revolution. Curiously, it also indicated that nationalism may be a more potent force in the Middle East than many analysts preoccupied with the impact of the Islamic Revolution believed. The Arabs in Khuzistan and the Shiites in eastern Iraq remained loyal to their governments despite predictions to the contrary.

Third, it is extremely difficult to assess the military capabilities of developing countries. Iran and Iraq had not fought in a conventional war for over 35 years, except for small unit action in Dhofar and against Israel. Both countries were armed with the best weapons that technology could provide so, on paper, making appropriate allowances for the effects of the revolution on the Iranian armed forces, it seemed a sure bet that Iraq could execute and win a short violent war against Iran. But military analysts had not correctly evaluated the ability of a nontechnologically advanced nation to operate sophisticated weapons. Unable to use the weapons at their maximum capability (or anything close to it), both Iran and Iraq fused modern weapons with World War II tactics. Moreover, both nations depended upon supply from other nations to maintain these weapons, but more importantly, they also needed expert advice and training assistance from weapon suppliers. It was remarkable how quickly weapon efficiency dropped once the advisors of both the United States and the Soviet Union had been released. This factor should be studied more closely and considered in military assessments of developing countries. Training assistance may be of more strategic importance to the developing country than an assured supply of equipment, ammunition, and spare parts.

The final conclusion is that any nation contemplating war must be precise and realistic in the determination of its objectives, policy, and strategy. Ambiguity in any one of these factors or failure to integrate them properly will certainly lead to failure on the battlefield. For a politician, there may be a virtue in vagueness towards your enemy; it may even be a virtue towards your allies, but vagueness can have no virtue among statesmen and strategists who intend to use military force to achieve their political objectives. Had Saddam Hussein properly evaluated the conflicting demands of his political objectives and security policy on his strategic concept, he may have been able to devise a war winning strategy at a price he was willing to pay—more likely he would have abandoned the entire enterprise. Since he did not, what started out as Saddam's Qadisiya may yet prove to be his Waterloo.

ENDNOTES

1. Sir John Bagot Glubb, *The Great Arab Conquests,* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1953, pp. 189-204.

2. Editorial, *The New York Times,* September 23, 1980, p. A22.

3. Parallels such as the ancient exhaustion of Persia and the modern disarray in Iran following the Islamic Revolution that offered the Arabs the opportunity to defeat a potentially stronger adversary.

4. Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict Among Nations,* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977, pp. 11-21.

5. For an excellent recent discussion not only of the Shatt al-Arab territorial dispute, but also for many other sources of conflict in Southwest Asia, see: Robert Litwak, *Security in the Persian Gulf 2: Sources of Inter-State Conflict,* International Institute for Strategic Studies, Montclair, New Jersey: Allanheld Osman and Co., 1981. For the disputes between Iraq and Iran, see especially pp. 1-24.

6. Richard Hoffman, "Iran, Iraq on War Footing; Khomeini Urges Coup," *The Washington Post,* April 9, 1980, p. A18.

7. Harvey Sicherman, "Iraq and Iran at War: The Search for Security," *Orbis,* Vol. 24, No. 4, Winter 1981, pp. 711-717.

8. Litwak, pp. 5-10.

9. "Iraq Denounces 1975 Border Settlement With Iran," *The New York Times,* September 18, 1980, p. A8.

10. An opposing view may be found in Ray S. Cline, *World Power Trends and US Foreign Policy for the 1980's,* Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, pp. 119-137. Using a more sophisticated approach to assess military power potential in 1978, that encompassed qualitative and quantitative indicators such as manpower quality, weapon effectiveness, infrastructure and logistics, organizational quality, strategic research, and military effort, Cline concluded that Iraq had a small military edge over Iran.

11. Ned Temko, "Iran: Ragtag Military Holds Key," *Christian Science Monitor,* June 19, 1980, p. 1. Also see Michael Getler, "Iraq Gets Key Regional Role as Iran's Military Deteriorates," *The Washington Post,* April 11, 1980, p. A14 and Major General K. Perkins, "The Death of an Army: A Short Analysis of the Imperial Iranian Armed Forces," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defense Studies,* Vol. 125, No. 2, June 1980, pp. 21-23.

12. Abdul Kasim Mansur (pseud), "The Military Balance in the Persian Gulf: Who Will Guard the Gulf States From Their Guardians," *Armed Forces Journal International,* November 1980, p. 45.

13. US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance, *US Military Sales to Iran,* Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1976. This study finds that "Most informed observers feel that Iran will not be able to absorb and operate within the next five to ten years a large proportion of the sophisticated military systems purchased from the United States . . . ," p. viii.

14. Mansur.

15. Drew Middleton, "Iran and Iraq Test Mettle," *The New York Times,* September 23, 1980, p. A12.

16. Drew Middleton, "Iraqis Hold Military Edge in Confrontation With Iranians," *The New York Times,* April 13, 1980, p. A14.

17. Eric Rouleau, "The War and the Struggle for the State," *MERIP Reports,* No. 98, July-August 1981, pp. 3-8. For a discussion of the domestic motivation for the Iranian counterattack, see *Middle East Intelligence Survey,* Vol. 8, No. 19, January 1-15, 1981, pp. 147-148.

18. The strategic deliberations of the Iraqi and Iranian war planners have not been publicly disclosed. In analyzing the Gulf War, a strategic analyst's methodology must necessarily be one of inferring strategy and intentions from the observable events of the war.

19. The terrain appreciations written by British officers campaigning against the Kurds in mountains of Northern Iraq are excellent and still useful. See, for example: Colonel R. H. Beadon, "The Strategic Problems of Iraq," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute,* Vol. LXXVII, No. 518, November 1932, pp. 774-781; Colonel W. E. Blaker, "The Physical and Climatic Difficulties of the Mesopotamian Theater of War," *United Services Institute of India,* Vol. 56, No. 243, April 1926, pp. 111-121; and Lieutenant Colonel H. E. Crocker, "British Interests in the Persian Gulf," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute,* Vol. LXXVIII, No. 509, February 1933, p. 168.

20. The heavy winter rains cause extensive flooding in the coastal plain area. British campaigners in the 1920's and 1930's, as well as more ancient Arab historians, commented on the use of these flood waters to enhance military defense.

21. The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Survey, 1980-81,* London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981, p. 50.

22. *Ibid.*

23. Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War,* edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976, pp. 119-121 and Bernard Brodie's Commentary, pp. 648-650.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Andre Beaufre, *An Introduction to Strategy,* New York: Praeger, 1965, pp. 30-32.

26. For an overall view of the war up to January 1981, see the "War Between Iran and Iraq," *Strategic Survey, 1980-81,* International Institute for Strategic Studies, pp. 49-52; Edgar O'Ballance, "The Iraqi-Iranian War: The First Round," *Parameters,* Vol. XI, No. 1, March 1981, pp. 54-59; and Claudia Wright, "The Iraq-Iran War," *Foreign Affairs,* Vol. 59, No. 2, Winter 1980/81, pp. 286-303. For information regarding military operations after January 1981, various accounts in newspapers, news magazines, and other periodicals must be relied upon.

27. O'Ballance, pp. 54-55.

28. *Middle East Intelligence Survey,* Vol. 8, No. 13, October 1-15, 1980, pp. 97-104.

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31. Vahe Petrossian, "Iran: Revolution Before Victory," *Middle East Economic Digest,* Vol. 24, No. 42, October 17, 1980, pp. 15-16.

32. John Kifner, "Iraqis Move Tanks Across a Key River to Drive on Abadan," *The New York Times,* October 12, 1980, p. 1.

33. *Strategy Week,* Vol. VII, No. 38, October 5-11, 1981, p. 4.

34. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Survey, 1980-81,* p. 50.

35. David Hirst, "Persian Gulf War Centers on Artillery Duels," *The Washington Post,* February 3, 1981, p. A21.

36. Blaker, pp. 111-121. In 1926 Colonel Blaker described this tactic thusly: ". . . whole tracts of country may be rendered unusable by the judicious cutting of dams, a flank may be secured or a line of advance barred by this simple device.' He also went on to describe the condition of the river during winter, ". . . when one travels up river during the floods, [one may] observe that the surface of the water on which the steamer floats is a foot or two above the level of the surrounding country . . . ."

37. "Iraqi Troops Brace for Floods," *The New York Times,* November 29, 1980.

38. "Iran-Iraq War: Long, Costly and Indecisive," *Far Eastern Economic Review,* No. 112, April 3, 1981, pp. 22-23. See also various newspaper accounts.

39. *Middle East Intelligence Survey,* Vol. 8, No. 19, January 1-15, 1981, pp. 147-148.

40. *Strategy Week,* Vol. VII, No. 20, May 25-31, 1981, p. 1. Nothing captures the character of this war so much as the report that both Iran and Iraq were desperately searching for artillery gun barrels to replace those they had burned out.

41. Drew Middleton, "Tactics in the Gulf War," *The New York Times,* October 19, 1980, p. 12 and "Iraqi Tank Guns Stop Missile Helicopters," *Aviation Week and Space Technology,* Vol. 113, No. 21, November 24, 1980, p. 66.

42. Commander William L. Dowdy, III, "Naval Warfare in the Gulf: Iraq Versus Iran," *US Naval Institute Proceedings,* Vol. 107/6/940, June 1981, pp. 114-117.

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44. *Strategy Week,* Vol. VI, No. 42, October 20-26, 1980, p. 6.

45. Michael Getler and George C. Wilson, "US Officials Say Diplomatic Action Headed Off Iraqi Escalation of War," *The Washington Post,* October 4, 1980, p. A16.

46. *Strategy Week,* Vol. VII, No. 39, October 12-18, 1981, p. 5.

47. Adeed I. Dawisha, "Iraq and the Arab World: The Gulf War and After," *The World Today,* Vol. 37, No. 3, March 1981, pp. 188-194.

48. O'Ballance, pp. 57-58; Mansur, pp. 44-46.

49. Robert C. Elliot, "Ripples in the Gulf," *Middle East International,* No. 137, November 7, 1980, p. 7.

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51. *Strategy Week,* Vol. VII, No. 14, April 13-19, 1981, p. 6; *Strategy Week,* Vol. VII, No. 15, April 20-26, 1981, p. 2.

52. "Iraqi Tank Guns Stop Missile Helicopters," *Aviation Week and Space Technology,* Vol. 113, No. 21, November 24, 1980, p. 66 and Mansur, pp. 44-45.

53. *Aviation Week and Space Technology,* p. 66.

54. *Strategy Week,* Vol. VII, No. 9, March 9-15, 1981, p. 1.

55. *Strategy Week,* Vol. VII, No. 32, August 24-30, 1981, p. 7.

56. Rouleau.

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This memorandum examines the Iran-Iraq War from a strategic perspective to determine its couses, to analyze the military strategy and events of the war in order to shed light on significant tactical and logistical developments, and to derive tentative conclusions regarding the strategic importance of the Gulf War. The author concludes that had Saddam Hussein properly evaluated the conflicting demands of his political objectives and security policy on his strategic concept, he would probably have abandoned the entire enterprise.

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